



Scott Harris, M.D., M.P.H.  
STATE HEALTH OFFICER

February 27, 2020

Dear Alabama Health Care Providers:

The Alabama Department of Public Health (ADPH) has been closely monitoring an evolving outbreak caused by COVID-19 (formerly nCoV) since late December 2019. Originating in Wuhan, Hubei Province, China, we have all witnessed continued focus as more countries outside of China are affected. To slow and contain transmission of this virus, our efforts in the United States have been proactive in identifying people at risk due to travel history and while in self-isolation, monitoring for signs of symptoms within a recommended time frame.

Although the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and ADPH have recommended that people who meet travel definitions contact ADPH, we have found that citizens have presented to other facilities without contacting us first. Although this number has declined over the past weeks, we do anticipate that patients may present to private offices, clinics, urgent care, and college health offices, and this may happen more often as the COVID-19 spreads to other countries and possibly becomes established in the U.S. We believe that due to the relationship you have with your patients and issues of access, availability, the desire to avoid emergency room crowds and wait times, you may indeed be the first point of contact for these patients and need to plan accordingly.

We are recommending that you establish a Front-Line Plan that is reasonable for your setting. Proper preparation and planning will assure that you can protect your staff and visiting patients should you encounter a high-risk patient or a patient requiring further evaluation or testing. We can offer general guidelines and anticipate that you will develop a plan meeting your organization's needs. Some suggestions include:

- Establish a Front-Line Plan and strategy for your staff. Refer to CDC's "Interim Infection and Prevention and Control Recommendations for Patients with confirmed 2019 Novel Coronavirus (2019-nCoV) or Persons Under Investigation for 2019 nCoV in Healthcare Settings."
- Place signage for visibility in your setting.
- Educate and prepare your staff and assign tasks. Examples include:
  - Consider assigning staff to monitor ADPH/CDC websites, health alerts, and news releases for updates.
  - Select a staff member that is assigned to keep inventory of supplies (flu masks, gloves, etc.).
  - Establish a person to contact and communicate with ADPH.

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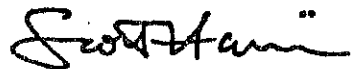
- Call ADPH Infectious Diseases and Outbreaks Division (ID&O) immediately for any medium or high-risk travelers with symptoms. Do not send them directly to the emergency room without consultation. We have 24/7/365 coverage available at 1-800-338-8374.
- Should you have a symptomatic patient come through your facility, please document contact with your staff and others, and identify other patients who were in the waiting room.

Please recognize that this is a dynamic and ever-changing situation and we highly recommend that you frequently visit the ADPH website as well as the CDC website for updates and summaries and suggest further that you modify your Front Line Plans accordingly. We also suggest referring to the following list of resources that are available.

- [www.alabamapublichealth.gov/infectiousdiseases/2019-coronavirus.html](http://www.alabamapublichealth.gov/infectiousdiseases/2019-coronavirus.html)
- [www.alabamapublichealth.gov/infectiousdiseases/assets/cov-hospital-screening.pdf](http://www.alabamapublichealth.gov/infectiousdiseases/assets/cov-hospital-screening.pdf)
- [www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html](http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html)
- [www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/infection-control.html](http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/infection-control.html)
- [www.alabamapublichealth.gov/cep/assets/hosptemplatesidfillable.pdf](http://www.alabamapublichealth.gov/cep/assets/hosptemplatesidfillable.pdf)

We remain available to assist you in any way possible. Please feel free to reach out to us for consultation when needed.

Sincerely,



Scott Harris, M.D., M.P.H.  
State Health Officer

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